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Six New Languages Added to 2018 Election Language Assistance Requirements

SACRAMENTO – Secretary of State Alex Padilla announced today the language assistance requirements for 2018 as mandated by law. Elections Code Section 14201(b)(1) outlines state language access requirements for each county and provides determinations as to which precincts must provide facsimile ballots, or a posted photocopies of ballots, in non-English languages. This is the first time the State of California is designating Panjabi (Punjabi), Hmong, Syriac, Armenian, Persian, and Arabic as languages covered under Section 14201 in designated counties.

[Click here to view the statewide language determinations summary by county.](#)

"Elections are the cornerstone of our democracy and voting rights include access to voting information in a voter's preferred language," said Secretary of State Alex Padilla. "These new language requirements will better serve voters who prefer their ballot in a language other than English and will help local elections officials better serve their diverse communities. For the first time, we will expand ballot translation into six new languages to better meet the needs of our state's increasingly diverse population."

Under Section 14201(b)(1), the Secretary of State must identify (1) the number of residents of voting age in each county and precinct who are (2) members of a single language minority, that (3) lack sufficient skills in English to vote without assistance. If that number equals 3 percent or more of the voting age residents of a particular county or precinct, "the Secretary of State shall find a need to provide at least two facsimile copies with the ballot measures and ballot instructions printed in Spanish or other applicable language in the affected polling places." (Cal. Elec. Code § 14201(b)(1)).

Additionally, Section 14201(a) provides the Secretary of State with the authority to determine if facsimile ballots shall be printed in other languages and posted "if a significant and substantial need" is found. The determinations provided to counties identify which languages require the posting of facsimile ballots, based on the Secretary's Section 14201(a) authority. As part of our review, the Secretary of State's office considered whether a sufficient number of precincts within a county included limited English proficient populations compared to the total number of precincts in the county.

“We are able to make these language determinations thanks to the most recent demographic information made available by the U. S. Census,” added Secretary Padilla. “Census data remains a vital tool in election officials’ duty to serve voters who speak a language other than English.”

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